



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

FORMER UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE CHAIR PLEADS GUILTY

Aided and abetted receipt and concealment of avian virus

PORTLAND, Maine—United States Attorney Paula D. Silsby announced that John K. Rosenberger, the former chairman of the Animal and Food Sciences Department at the University of Delaware's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, pleaded guilty Thursday to aiding and abetting the receipt and concealment of a smuggled avian flu virus.

The investigation was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement special agents assisted by the Department of Commerce and the Department of Agriculture.

According to documents filed with the court, in May 1998 an American veterinarian working for a large poultry producer in Saudi Arabia contacted Rosenberger for help in identifying and typing a disease. Employees of the Saudi poultry producer smuggled a sample of the avian influenza virus into the United States and provided it to Rosenberger's laboratory.

Rosenberger knew that the virus had been smuggled into the country without the necessary permits and licenses. Later, Rosenberger communicated with employees at Maine Biological Laboratories (MBL) in Winslow, Maine. They discussed the nature of the avian influenza disease and the best methods for developing a vaccine for it.

In January 1999, Rosenberger directed an employee of his laboratory to ship a sample of the virus to the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa. The laboratory identified the sample as avian influenza subtype H9N2. Rosenberger relayed this information to MBL and the American veterinarian working for the Saudi poultry producer.

Rosenberger later used the Saudi avian influenza virus to test some of the sample vaccines MBL produced. He reported his findings to MBL.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). ICE seeks to prevent acts of terrorism by targeting the people, money and materials that support terror and criminal networks.